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P. Gay, Lance

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P. Deighton, Len

The Spy Novel Has Lost Something

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YESTERDAY'S SPY. By Len Deighton.
Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich. 232
pages. \$7.95.

How romantic it once was when we had our myths about the Central Intelligence Agency. Trench-coated musclemen etched from an Old Spice ad carving their way through the netherworld of international intrigue and national bedrooms.

But what a shattering letdown was it in the last year to see the cloak and dagger men unveiled and shown to be aging, sallow-cheeked pussycats like James A. Angleton, spooks of yesterday's war viewing the world uneasily and shyly through bottle-bottom glasses.

Perhaps that's done more harm to the agency than any of the spectacular revelations of the past year and it certainly has put a new light on the old spy novel.

Even Len Deighton's simple and hurried novels have lost their gripping power as heroes take on the cast of an Angleton or a William Colby. Even Deighton's previous best-

selling novels "The Ip-
cress File" and "Funeral
in Berlin" don't read the
same today.

The problem is that Deighton's characters are never developed, but left like the script of a movie to be fleshed out by an actor. Plug in an Angleton or Colby instead and you see the problem.

And the other problem is that movie fame has led Deighton to write his novels with all the flourishes and pauses that fit celluloid: a method of

writing that makes it easier to translate it to a script. And "Yesterday's Spy" a quickly written and fast moving novel about an effort to block a nuclear bombs from falling into the hands of the Palestinian Liberation Organization — seems cut for the movie set.

A taut tale nonetheless, complete with the expected dosage of gunfire, car fires and bonfires with an explosive ending. You won't miss anything by waiting for the movie.